

It's 10:33pm. Everyone is asleep, except for me and the cat. I've been thinking about this letter for weeks. It's just that every time I sit down to write it, I can't seem to STOP writing. I have tried to wring the meaning out of small moments of sudden panic (moments like the catch in my breath when I say "I'll see you afterschool," but really mean, "I hope, with everything in me, that you survive this school day") and somehow turn them into little quips about how everything is bad, but we keep on keepin' on. But the more I write and delete, write and delete, I find that there is no meaning to those small moments of sudden panic beyond the utter malfunction of human community and connection.

And each of those panicked thoughts compound, a weight on my shoulders that I doubt will ever be lifted.

I know I am failing. I am trying, but I am failing, because the tide is strong and I am only a speck of sand on the shore. In our house, we talk all the time that all bodies are good bodies. That your body is the least interesting thing about you. We talk about race. We talk about boycotts. We talk about bullies, and the reasons why someone might say something hurtful. We don't watch YouTube alone. We don't play Roblox. We go to therapy. But, it all feels insignificant when there are children around the world being blown to smithereens, when families are being torn apart, when kids are living in concentration camps, when the rich get incomprehensibly richer, when the state I live in has the highest per capita incidence of childhood cancer in the nation. I know we are all failing.

I could go on. I might keep going on. I email my representatives. I sign into the state house website and log my opposition to dangerous bills. I buy organic when I can. I canceled my Amazon subscription, and haven't been to Target in a year. I read books. There is so much more I

could be doing. There are people putting their lives on the line. I enter never-ending anxiety spirals and pick fights with my husband over not caring enough about any of ...this. All this. All that. I have to care about it ALL. I have to care for both of us and all of us.

It's 11:20pm. It's not just me awake anymore. My daughter has padded out on tiptoe to the living room, to watch something calming--a painting restoration video--to help clear her anxious thoughts. She recently got her period, and it's so heavy and so unpredictable, and the (very kind) doctor shrugged and said, "That's just how it can be sometimes," and I wanted to scream, because this very kind doctor is also a woman, but she does not see that "the curse" is not actually menstruation. *THE* curse is White-Supremacist Capitalist Patriarchy (as bell hooks rightly named it), that prevents us from learning about women's bodies, prevents us from trusting our instincts to know when something is wrong, prevents us from accessing treatments that would be helpful, prevents us from being rested and well, and keeps a growing child awake at night for reasons she can't even name.

All this, and I learned how to play a chord on the guitar. I helped a 5th grader find a new book series to love. I hugged people. I encouraged a friend. I celebrated my sister's achievements. I sent my brother's girlfriend a happy birthday text. I smiled at babies. I cried at a wedding. I wrote in my journal. I bought flowers. I'll keep buying them.